A Seasonable

DISSWASIVE

FROM

PERSECUTION,

HUMBLY

And Modestly, yet with Christian Freedom and Plainness of Speech, offered to the Consideration of all concern'd therein; on behalf generally, of all that suffer for Conscience sake, particularly of the People called

QUAKERS.

By (one of them)

THOMAS ELLWOOD.

I will punish all that oppress them, Jer. 30. 20.

I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy Children. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own Flesh, and they shall be drunken with their own Blood, as with sweet Wine: And all Flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob, Isa. 49. 25, 26.

And now I say unto you, refrain from these Men, and let them alone —— least haply ye be found even to fight against God, Acts 5. 38, 39.

LONDON,

Printed, for *William Sheate*, and are to be Sold in *George-yard* in *Lombard-street*, 1683.

King Charles I.

IN HIS

ΕΙΚΩΝ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΗ.

THOU seest, O God, how much Cruelty among Christians is acted under the colour of Religion; as if we could not be Christians, unless we crucifie one another. Sect. 12. *'Tis thought by many wise men, that the prepostrous Rigour, and unreasonable Severity, which some men carried before them in* England, *was not the least incentive that kindled, and blew up into those horrid Flames the Sparks of* Discontent, *which wanted not prediſposed fuel of Rebellion in* Ireland; —— *They saw themselves apparently threatened by the covetous Zeal, and uncharitable Fury of some men, who think it a great argument of the truth of their Religion, to endure no other but their own.* Ibid.

They confess their known weakness, as to Truth and Justice, who chuse rather to contend by Arms than by Argument. Sect. 9.

It argues rather those men to be conscious of their defects of Reason, and convincing Arguments, who call in assistance of meer force to carry on the weakness of their Counsels and Proposals. Sect. 6.

A DISSWASIVE FROM Perſecution, &c,

PERSECUTION is a Word of ſo harſh a ſound, and ſo generally *diſtaſteful* to *Engliſh Ears*, that ſcarce any of thoſe who are moſt forward and active in that Work, are willing to have their actions called by that Name. That none therefore, who have ſet an hand to that Work, or whoſe minds are any whit inclining thereunto, may, from the diſlike they have to the Word [*Perſecution*] reject this *Diſwaſive* as a thing wherein they are not concerned: I think it needful here to declare what it is I mean by *Perſecution*. By *Perſecution*, then I intend *a forcing or compelling any by pains or penalties, Bodily or Pecuniary, to relinquiſh or forſake that Exerciſe of Religion, or way of Worſhip, which they believe to be the right Way of Worſhip, and the true and acceptable Exerciſe of Religion, which God hath required of them: And to receive, embrace, conform to and perform ſome other exerciſe of Religion, and way of Worſhip, which they, who are ſo compelled, are either firmly perſwaded is not the Right, or at leaſt have no belief that it is the Right.* This (in ſhort) is that which I call *Perſecution*: And this is that I diſwade from, whatever other Name the Actors of it may pleaſe themſelves in calling it by.

I.

To begin now with the first of these, *viz. the forcing or compelling any to forsake and leave that exercise of Religion, or way of Worship, which they believe to be the right way of Worship, and the true exercise of Religion, which God requireth of them*: The Reasons by which I shall endeavour to dissuade all men from such an undertaking, are these.

1. You may, for ought you know, be found *Fighters against God*: You are not, you cannot be, upon your own principles, infallibly sure, that that way of Worship, which you thus endeavour to force us from, is not the *true* Worship of God. We know it is so; you do not know it is not so: If in the end to prove to be so, how sad will your condition be, who have thus bent your force to hinder the true Worship of God, and set your selves to restrain us from performing that, which God hath required of us? I pray consider, *Saul* was as confident, as you can be; and had as good ground for his confidence, as you can have: and thereupon he went smartly on for a while (as some of you have done) making *Havock of the Church, entring into every House, and haling Men and Women, committed them to Prison*, Acts 8. 3. *I Persecuted*, saies he *this way unto the Death, binding and delivering into Prisons, both Men and Women*, Chap. 22. 4. *Many of the Saints did he shut up in Prison, and when they were put to Death*, he *gave his voice against them*, Chap. 26. 10. He *punisht them oft in every Synagogue, and compelled them to Blaspheme: And being exceedingly mad against them, he Persecuted them even unto strange Cities*, vers. 11. And this he *verily thought with himself that he ought to do*, vers. 9. Yet all this while he was out of his Thoughts; for in all this he was *wrong*, and they were *right* whom he thus Persecuted. And may it not be so with you? why then will you run so great an hazard.

2. By endeavouring to *force* us from that way of worship, which we believe the Lord hath led us into and requireth of us, you endeavour to force us to *make Shipwrack of Faith*. We have solemnly and sincerly declared unto you, that we firmly believe, and are fully perswaded and satisfied in our Consciences, that God hath led us into this way of Worship wherein we serve him, and that he requireth our perseverance therein. This is our Faith in this particular. Now so far as you endeavour by *Threats*, by *Terrors*, by *Penalties* and *Cruelties* to force any of us from this way of Worship: so far you endeavour to force us *to make Shipwrack of Faith, and of good Conscience too*: which if through your means any should do, *the Guilt thereof will lie heavy upon you*.

3. In

3. In endeavouring by *force* and *cruelty* to restrain us from worshipping God, according as (we are fully perswaded) he hath taught us and doth require us, you go out of the Path of the Righteous, and tread in the steps of the Wicked and Ungodly. It was the *Egyptians* that dealt thus with the *Israelites*; not the *Israelites* that dealt so with the *Egyptians*, as you may read from the 7th. Chap. of *Exodus* to the 15. It was the Heathen (who knew not God) that dealt thus with *Daniel*; not *Daniel* that dealt so with them, *Dan.* 6. It was the hard hearted, unbelieving Jews and unconverted Gentiles, that dealt thus with the Apostles and Primitive Christians; not the Christians that dealt so with them, *Acts.* 4. 17, 18. & 5. 28. & 14. 2. & 17. 5. It was the *Blood-thirsty Papists* that dealt thus with the *Protestants* in Queen *Maries* Daies. And can you bring a greater *Odium* upon your selves, than, by imitating these, to make Folks think you approve what they have done?

4. That Exercise of Religion which you would force us from, is not simply and of it self condemned or disallowed by that Law, by the severity of which you would force us from it. It is not simply and positively, *every* Assembly or Meeting for the exercise of Religion in other manner than according to the *Liturgy*, &c. that is forbidden and made punishable, by that Act of the 22th. of *Charles* the second against Conventicles; but such only as hath at it above four persons besides the Family. Any Family then, (how numerous soever) and four persons over and above, may meet, under the favour of that Act, for the exercise of Religion, though in other manner than according to the *Liturgy*, &c. which plainly shews that the Law-makers did not look upon such exercise of Religion to be evil simply in it self; (for then they would have utterly condemned and forbidden it to all, even the least numbers) but that they presupposed a danger from the numbers resorting to such Assemblies; and therefore did *not absolutely forbid the exercise*, but laid a *limitation* upon the number of persons that might resort thereunto. Now the permitting this Exercise to any, is an admitting of it to be good: and the offence lies not in the Exercise it self, but in the numbers resorting to it; and that only so far as they may be thought dangerous to the publick Peace. Since therefore the Exercise of Religion which ye would drive us from, is so far from being in it self evil or unlawful, that it receives some kind of Countenance even from that very Law by which ye pretend to act. Since also the experience ye have had of our *peaceable* deportment in our Meetings, and of our quiet, and chearful subjection to the Government we have lived under, hath sufficiently secured you from all danger from our Meetings, how numerous soever: Why will you af-

flict, moleſt, trouble, impriſon, impoveriſh and ruin your *Countreymen*, your *Neighbours*, your *Acquaintance*, your *Fellow-citizens* and *Townſmen*, your *Correſpondents*, your *Relations*, your *Friends* and *Fellow-Proteſtants*, for that which is not *Evil* not *unlawful* in it ſelf, not *hurtful* to you not to any!

5. In thus eagerly purſuing us, and diſturbing our *peaceable* Meetings, you give your ſelves, as well as us, a great deal of needleſs trouble. For, as that learned Doctor in the Jewiſh Law did well obſerve, in the Apoſtles Caſe, *If this Counſel or this work be of Men, it will come to nought. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it*, Acts 5. 38, 39. So ſay I to you in our Caſe (And I wiſh ſome one of your own, that were *had*, like him, *in reputation among all the People*, would have done this for me) *If this People and their Meetings be not of God, you need not thus beſtir you, you may ſpare your pains; they'll come to nought; But if they be of God, ye cannot overthrow them.* So that whether we be of God, or be not of God, your labour againſt us is in vain. Either we ſhall fall without it, or ſtand for all it. Be entreated therefore, for your own ſakes, as well as for ours, to take *Gamaliel's* Counſel, **Refrain from theſe men and let them alone.**

6. And laſtly, Be pleaſed to conſider what ſort of *Agents* and *Inſtruments* you are fain to make uſe of (and not ſeldom are your ſelves made uſe of by) to carry on this work. Are not the *vileſt* wretches, the moſt *profligate* of mankind, for the moſt part, the firſt movers in it? Where is there an *Informer* upon this *Statute*, who has not firſt been either ſome *notorious Criminal* (whom a little *Rote-reading*, and a favourable *Ordinary*, have ſaved from the *Gallows*) or ſome *riotous* Spendthrift, whoſe *Debaucheries* have brought him to a condition worſe than that of *Beggery*, *viz.* *A rapacious* deſire of repairing his own *Self-ruined* Fortunes, by the *unrighteous ruining* of others? And, to ſay nothing, in this place, of the *Generoſity* of a true *Engliſh* nature, which hates to be *rid* and *commanded* by ſuch *baſe* and *infamous* Fellows (as not only *Conſtables*, and other inferior *Officers*, but even *Juſtices*, *Aldermen*, yea, and *Mayors* too, have ſometimes been) can you think it conſiſtent with *Chriſtianity*, with *Humanity*, with the *Honour* and *Intereſt* of the *Nation*, and of your *Selves*, that ſo many thouſand *Families* of your *ſober*, *honeſt*, *conſciencious*, *induſtrious*, and *peaceable Neighbours* (againſt whom, even *Envy* her ſelf can find *no occaſion*, except as againſt *Daniel* of old, *Dan.* 6. 5. *concerning the Law of their God*) ſhould be *ſacrificed* to the bruitiſh and inſatiable *Luſt* of ſuch a diſſolute and ſhameleſs *Crew*, and that by you? Can you think it will

embalm

embalm your *Memories*, and *sweeten* your *Names* to after *Ages*, to have it recorded to *Posterity*, that you were the men that *rifled* your *Neighbours Houses*; that made *spoil* and *havock* of their *Goods*, that *stript* them of their *Estates*, that *imprisoned* their *Persons*, that *ruined* their *Families*; and all this for no other cause, but only and alone for worshipping and serving God, in a quiet and peaceable manner, according as they believed he required them to do? O never give cause for this *Epitaph* to be written upon your Tomb, **Here lies a Persecutor of the People of God.**

II.

Now for the other Branch, which I mentioned, of *Persecution*, *viz.* *The Forcing or compelling of any by Pains or Penalties, bodily or pecuniary, to receive, embrace, conform to and perform some Exercise of Religion, and way of worship, which they, who are so compelled, are either firmly perswaded is not the right, or at least have no belief that it is the right.* The Reasons by which I shall endeavour to dissuade all men from such an undertaking, are these.

1. In thus *imposing* your way of Worship upon others, you act *quite contrary* to Christ and his Apostles. The Author of the Christian Religion, though he had all power in Heaven and in Earth, given unto him, yet did not make use of that power, as you do of your power, by outward severities and rigour to force People to receive, and profess the Religion which he taught. But his usual saying was, *He that hath Ears to hear let him hear.* And when two of his Disciples, in their young state, and in an overwarm zeal against some that did not receive him, did once ask him leave *to command Fire to come down from Heaven and consume them*; he sharply rebuk'd them with a [*Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of:*] and instructing them better, told them, *The Son of Man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them.* And instead of thrusting himself upon those *Samaritans*, that were not willing to receive him, he passed them by, *and went to another Village*, Luke 9. 53. *to* 57. The Apostles, when the *Jews* rejected their Message, did not attempt to impose it on them; but said, seeing you put from you,—— lo, *we turn to the Gentiles*, *Acts* 13. 46. You read that Christ whipt some out of the Temple, *John* 2. 15. but ye never read that he whipt any in. Why then will you steer a Course so *directly contrary* to Christ and his Apostles?

2. In

2. In this impoſing your way of Worſhip upon others, you follow the worſt of Patterns *Nebuchadnezzar*, King of *Babylon*, a Blaſphemous, Cruel and Heatheniſh Prince, whom God in an extraordinary manner did puniſh; whoſe Heart was chang'd from Mans, and a *Beaſts Heart* given unto him, *Dan.* 4. The *Beaſt* which *John* ſaw coming up out of the Earth, that *ſpake as a Dragon*, *Rev.* 13. 11. Both theſe impoſed their Worſhip upon others, and that under the ſevereſt Penalties. But can you think it either honourable or ſafe for you to imitate ſuch Bruitiſh Examples!

3. Inforcing People to your way of Worſhip, who have no beleif that it is the Right you cauſe them to ſin: for *whatſoever is not of Faith is Sin*, *Rom.* 14 23. And therefore as the Apoſtles there argues, *He that doubteth, is damned*, (that is condemned) *if he eat.* And is not the Argument as forcible in this Caſe, as in that of Eating? May it not with like reaſon be ſaid, he that doubteth that your way of Worſhip is not right, is damned if he conform to it, becauſe his Conformity is not of Faith; for what ſoever is not of Faith is ſin. And the *Wages of Sin ye know is Death*, *Rom.* 6. 23. Now if they that conform in ſuch a doubting mind do therein ſin, and thereby bring Damnation (that is Condemnation) upon themſelves; what may you expect who by Threatnings, by Impriſonments, by Fines, or other outward Penalties, do drive them thereunto!

4. Enforcing People to your way of Worſhip, who have a firm perſwaſion and belief that it is not the right; you make Men *Hypocrites* and *Timeſervers*: For ſuch as have not fortitude enough to bear the ſtorm of Perſecution, and to undergo with patience the various Cruelties inflicted on them; ſuch, through fear, may fall into temptation, and perhaps, for Self-ſecurity, may comply with that, which they certainly believe is not right. And herein they ſin againſt their knowledg, and you are the Cauſe of this Sin of theirs, by driving them unto it; and at your hands will it be required.

5. By obtruding and forcing your Religion upon others, you greatly diſparage and undervalue it, and give Men the more ground to ſuſpect and diſlike it: for Men are naturally apt to queſtion the goodneſs of that Commodity, which is put upon them whether they will or no. Thoſe Wares that are true and good need no ſuch waies to put them off. The Chriſtian Religion, in its pureſt and beſt Eſtate, was never thruſt upon any; nor need it. To be without it is puniſhment ſufficient; and greater than any you can inflict: They who in the Parable were invited to the great Supper, *Luke*, 14. and made their Ex-

ſes and did not come, were not *fetcht in with a Capiat*, nor *Fined and Impriſoned till they would come*; but were utterly ſhut out and debarred from coming: [*I ſay unto you, that none of thoſe men that were bidden ſhall taſte of my, Supper* ver. 24.] That was their puniſhment, and a grievous one too. The Apoſtles of our Lord (as one of them declares, 2 *Cor.* 4. 2.) having received the Miniſtry of the Goſpel, and *renounced the hidden things of Diſhoneſty*, did not walk *in Craftineſs* (and I am ſure I may ſafely add, They did not walk in *Cruelty*) *nor handled the Word of God deceitfully, but by manifeſtation of the Truth commended themſelves to every Man's Conſcience in the ſight of God.* Now I pray conſider; if you are preſwaded, that that Exerciſe of Religion which you perform is the right, That that way of Worſhip which you profeſs is the true, were it not fairer and more becoming thoſe pretences, for you, as many of you as are Preachers, by Preaching, as many as are Hearers by a pious Life and Godly Converſation, to commend your ſelves (as did the Apoſtles) by manifeſtation of the Truth to every Man's Conſcience in the ſight of God; than to manifeſt your Indignation and Envy towards thoſe that are not of your Perſwaſion, by committing them to Goal, rifling their Houſes, tearing away their Goods, ruining their Eſtates, and beggering their Children?

6. You break that great Command, which Chriſt ſaies is the *Law and the Prophets*, viz. *All things whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them*, *Mat.* 7. 12. This Command ye tranſgreſs, in endeavouring to force others to your way of Worſhip: for ye would not be ſo dealt with your ſelves. Conſider this well I entreat you. If you were to be compelled by *Impriſonment*, *Baniſhment*, *Fines*, *Confiſcations*, or any other extream and rigorous Proceedings, to conform your ſelves to that way of Worſhip, and Exerciſe of Religion which we profeſs, or any others whom ye now preſent: Would you not think it extream hard, and very unjuſt? no doubt ye would, and ſo ye juſtly might. But then withal conſider, that your impoſing thus on others, is *no leſs hard* to them, *no leſs unjuſt* in you.

Ye have known us long, ye have had large experience of us; ye have tried us many waies, and proved us after divers manners. *And what evil can ye convict us of to this Day?* Have

we not alwaies been a *quiet*, *peaceable*, *harmless* People? when being reviled did we revile? or when being persecuted did we not patiently suffer it? Ah what do you propose to your selves? Do ye think to root us out and destroy God's Heritage? It is impossible: The *Root of Jesse bears us*, and upon the immoveable *Rock* are we immoveably built. *O dash not your selves against it!* But if ye could destroy or ruine Persons, yet is it possible that there can lodg in English Breasts such *more-than Barbarous Inhumanity*, to destroy so many thousand Families! The *Rome-Rid French* and *Irish* have gone far that way; but English Hands were never so *defiled*: God grant they never may. Do ye think by rigorous and cruel usage to fright us out of our Religion, and force us to desert our Principles? How can ye hope to accomplish such a thing, who have seen our unmoved Constancy, and stedfast Perseveranee therein, under all the Sufferings that have hitherto been inflicted on us? Have not many of us been already stript of all their outward Substance? not a Bed being left them to lie on, not a Stool to sit on, not a Dish to eat in. Is there a Prison in the Nation, or a Dungeon in a Prison, which has not been a Witness of our *Groanings*? Have we not been tried by *Banishment*, and proved by *Death* it self? Death in *New-England*, by the Hand of the Hangman. Death in Old *England*, by the rough hands of rude and boisterous Officers and Soldiers, who have given divers of our Friends those Blows, which in few Daies have brought them to their Graves. I might add to these, burning in the Forehead, cutting off Ears, unmerciful Bearings, Whippings, and cruel Scourgings. But did any, or all, of these deter us from the Worship of our God? Nay, hath not our chearful undergoing all these Hardships, sufficiently evidenced to the World, that our Religion and Consciences are dearer to us; than our Estates, our Liberties, our Limbs or our Lives? Why then will you repeat severities upon us, which have so often been tried before in vain? Can you take pleasure in putting others to pain, and delight your selves in afflicting others? O suffer not your Natures so far too degenerate from the Gentleness and Tenderness of true and generous English-Men!

And think not the worse of us for our Faithfulness to our God! *He that is true to God, will be true to Men also*; But he that

that is false and treacherous to God, how is it likely he should be true to Men? Endeavour not therefore to draw us into Unfaithfulness to our God: for that, to be sure, would be hurtful to us, and no way advantageous to you. Neither be ye exasperated against us, from the difficulty you find in breaking our Meetings, or because that when you have dragg'd us out of our Meetings, and Fined or Imprisoned us for being there, you find us there again: But rather take it for an Argument, that we sincerely love and believe our Religion; and that we find our Meetings worth suffering for. For indeed, in our Meetings we do meet with the Lord our God, *in whose Presence is fulness of Joy*, Psal. 16. 11: *The Law of whose Mouth is better unto us than thousands of Gold and of Silver*, Psal. 119. 72. *Yea, his Loving Kindness is better than Life*, Psal. 63. 3. *The God of Israel, is He that giveth Strength and Power to his People; Blessed be God*, Psal. 68. 35. Therefore harden not your selves against us, I beseech you, by miscalling our *Constancy*, *Obstinacy*; our *Stedfastness*, *Stubbornness*; our *Zeal*, *Self-will*; our *Faithfulness* to God, *Contempt* of Authority: But look back upon the Apostles of our Lord, and see if they did not just as we do. *They were taken at a Meeting* in Solomon's Porch, *Acts.* 3. 11. *and sent to Prison for Preaching*, Chap. 4. 2. 3. Next Day they were brought forth and Examined before the Council, ver. 5, 7. And having made their Defence, they were streightly threatned, and *commanded not to speak at all, nor teach in the Name Jesus*, ver 17. 18. what Answer did they make? *Whether it be right* (said they) *in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judg ye*, ver. 19. and presently after we read, *They spake the Word of God with Boldness*, ver. 31. Well, they were quickly clapt up again, Chap. 5. 17. 18. But when the Council came together, and sent for them to be brought before them, and they were not to be found in the Prison, ver. 21. 22. (God having by his Angel delivered them in the Night, ver. 19.) one came and told the Council, *Behold, The Men whom ye put in Prison, are standing in the Temple and Teaching the People*, ver 25. And when they had sent Officers, and fetcht them again before the Council, and asked them, saying, *Did we not straitly command you, that you should not teach in this Name? And behold ye*

have filled Jerusalem with your Doctrine, &c. ver. 28. Their Answer was, *We ought to obey God rather than Men*, ver. 29. Do you think the Council did not take this for a disrespectful and provoking Answer? Do ye think the Jews did not count the Apostles a *stubborn*, *obstinate*, *self-willed* People, that did this in despight of Authority? yet you, in words, condemn the Jews and their Council, and justifie the Apostles in their thus acting; and therein you do well, O let not your *Actions* condemn what your *Words* justifie, nor justifie what your *Words* condemn! For if you persecute us for the same things which the Apostles both did, and were persecuted for doing; ye therein at once both condemn the Apostles, and justifie those that persecuted them. And as they brought the *Guilt of Innocent Blood*, and thereby the *Wrath of God*, upon themselves: even so will ye also upon your selves, if ye persist in the same Course. Which that ye may not do, is (for your own sakes as well as for ours) my earnest Desire, and the End of this *Dissuasive*.

THE END.

2305/0